

TABLE 1  
MORPHOMETRIC DATA FOR THE THREE RACES OF LESSER SAND PLOVER CAUGHT AT PT. CALIMERE

Specimen no., species, sex	Wing	Bill	Tarsus	Tail	Wt. (g)	Wing/Bill ratio	Wing/Tarsus ratio	Bill length/Bill depth ratio	Date of capture
1. <i>Charadrius mongolus stegmanni</i> , F	125	17.7	27.5	49.5	47	7.1	4.5 *(4.20-4.78)	3.76 *( $< 3.00$ <i>mongolus</i> group)	15.3.90
2. <i>Charadrius mongolus schaeferi</i> , M*	130 (127-134)	21 (17-21)	34 (33-36)	51	53	6.19	3.82 *(3.50-4.06)	4.4 *( $> 3.80$ <i>atrifrons</i> group)	12.4.90
3. <i>Charadrius mongolus pamirensis</i> , F*	128 (128-134)	17.2 (16-18)	33 (32-34)	49	57	7.4	3.9	3.6 *(3.57-4.07) (From Ladakh and Kashmir)	28.4.90

\* Measurement ranges given by Cramp and Simmons (1983). M = Male, F = Female.

ratio also tallies with *schaeferi*. Though *schaeferi* comes under the *atrifrons* group its occurrence in India has not been definitely stated by Ali and Ripley (1983) as it is mentioned as *atrifrons*. It is not clear whether they meant the *atrifrons* group or the race.

*Charadrius mongolus pamirensis*: The western race winters in western India, Pakistan, the Arabian Sea, Persian Gulf, Seychelles and East Africa, south to Cape Province and Namibia (Cramp and Simmons 1983). The female specimen collected in breeding plumage had mottled white patches on sides of forehead, and dark brown tinge on ear coverts, which tallies with the colour pattern of *pamirensis*. As this

race has been known so far to winter only in western India, its occurrence in south-east India is noteworthy.

It is possible that all four subspecies of both groups winter in India as in Australia, where the three subspecies of both groups of lesser sand plover have been reported by Lane (1986). More data are being analysed to determine the races of lesser sand plover wintering in south India.

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#### 8. OCCURRENCE OF *LARUS MINUTUS* PALLAS IN KUTCH

NNB saw what he thought was a little gull *Larus minutus* at Rudramata dam on 27 November 1987. On a subsequent visit to the dam by H, Shantilal Varu and others, the bird was not found to be present there. It appears that Dr. Salim Ali came

across a number of these gulls in the Rann of Kutch which he watched from a distance (*JBNHS* 71: 3), but withheld definite identification of them.

NNB along with the other members of the Pelican Nature Club of Kutch saw three *L. minutus*

on 19 December 1989 at Shinay dam (Anjar environs). On 21 December H accompanied NNB and the others on a visit to the dam again, when only one bird was present there. The gull was in juvenile or immature plumage; its size, tern-like habit of picking up food from the surface of the water, its colouration, including the zigzag pattern on the wings, dark patch on the crown, no black feathers on the underside of the wings, a black band at the end of the tail and dull red legs and feet, all pointed to its being the little gull. The only feature we must take

note of was the colour of the bill, which was dull red with a dark tip, not mentioned in any of the references we have at hand except BIRDS OF COAST AND SEA (Bruce Campbell 1977) wherein it is stated: ".....and the bill turns from red to blackish", describing the winter plumage. The gull seen by us repeatedly came to settle for a while on a slab of stone less than 100 m from where we were standing.

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August 16, 1990

M.K. HIMMATSINHJI

### 9. ON THE BLACK TERN *CHLIDONIAS NIGER NIGER* (LINN.)

On 25 May 1989 at about 1800 hrs, a single specimen of the black tern *Chlidonias niger niger* (Linn.) was obtained by me from a fisherman on the beach at Point Calimere Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu. The tern was apparently cast ashore by high wind and gales that had been blowing for the previous two days. The following observations were taken during the six day period that the bird remained with me due to its inability to fly.

The measurements are as follows: bill from feathers : 40 mm, bill from skull : 45 mm, tarsus : 19 mm, wing : 257 mm, tail (outer) : 104 mm, tail (inner): 60 mm.

No moult recorded.

It required to be fed several times a day although the total quantity eaten was very small (4-5

8 cm long fish approx.). Fish had to be cut into tiny slivers and were taken in narrow end first. Very little water was taken although provided.

Exceptionally tame and accepted food from hand without hesitation. Juvenile feeding or begging posture commonly adopted with head set low over the shoulder and the mouth slightly open. Grew considerably bolder till it flew out of the door on the seventh day and was seen to be pursued by a pair of brahminy kites. No further record of the bird.

I wish to thank the staff of the B.N.H.S. Station, Vedaranyam for help in identification and measurement. Their guidance in various other respects is also gratefully acknowledged.

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VIVEK MENON

### 10. *STERNA BERGII THALASSINA* STRESEMANN — AN ADDITION TO THE AVIFAUNA OF SRI LANKA

There is uncertainty about the exact number of subspecies of *Sterna bergii*, the (large) crested or swift tern. Cramp (Chief Ed.) in BIRDS OF THE WESTERN PALEARCTIC lists four, namely :

*S.b. velox*, which inhabits the coasts of the Indian subcontinent, the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal to Burma and Western Malaysia. It is the largest and darkest.

*S. b. thalassina*, found in the Western Indian Ocean from about Tanzania to Chagos Island, Madagascar and the Mascarenes. It is the palest.

The nominate *S. b. bergii* is found at the southern end of Africa, in Namibia and S. Africa.

*S. b. cristata*, the eastern race, occurs from

China and Indonesia eastward.

Harrison (1985) adds a fifth: *S. b. enigma*, recently described from Mozambique.

Peters (1937) recognises five, which include *S. b. gwendolena*. Condon (1975) lists *gwendolena* for Australia, as well as two more, namely *pelecanoides* and *poliocerca*, bringing the number to eight or more subspecies worldwide. Thus there is not a generally accepted number of subspecies of *Sterna bergii*. Obviously a revision of the species is desirable.

In Sri Lanka the resident *S. b. velox* has dark slate-grey saddle and upperwings, in winter as well in summer. The appearance of these upperparts in the